on his second ascension to the throne, and to present his offices in these times of troubles which beset the empire. He was promoted Tu-tu ch'ien-shih and somewhat later Yu-tu-tu, Governor of Tat'ung. Two thousand Mongols arrived and plundered the region of Wei-yuan. Li Wen defeated and pursued them. The emperor granted him the title of Duke of Kao Yang. In the autumn of 1460 the Mongol Polai started a raid on a large scale invading Yen-men-kuan and devastating the country. The officials in the capital grew very anxious. Li Wen, however, forbade his troops to move. He was committed to prison and deliberation concerning capital punishment was held. The emperor pardoned him, but he was stripped of his titles except that of tu-tu ch'ien-shih, and an opportunity was granted to redeem his honor by fighting the Mongols in the regions of Yenan and Suei-te (*Annals* of Kansu 42: 28*a*; *Annals* of Hsining 27: 11*b*).

What was the reason of the unusual behavior of Li Wen?

During the whole reign of Emperor Ching Ti (1450–1457) intrigues went on among the ambitious eunuchs and the most prominent officials, some of them friends and some of them foes of Emperor Ching Ti or of the secluded Emperor Yin Tsung. The factions seethed with hatred, accused and slandered each other, coveting the highest positions, wreaking ruin on their rivals. Many executions of high officials cast a blot in the reigns of Ching Ti and Yin Tsung.

General Shih Heng had defended for Emperor Ching Ti the capital beseiged by Esen in 1449. During the illness of Emperor Ching Ti, he hatched a plot preparing the dethronement of Ching Ti and the enthronement of Yin Tsung. Near Yin Tsung he accused his rivals and seven executions of the most prominent officials followed. He was bestowed with the title of Pilar of the empire. But a comet appeared in the sky. It was an ominous portent, indicating that the seven executions caused by Shih Heng were disapproved by Heaven. Shih Heng was committed to prison. Later during one of the brightest days it thundered terribly for a whole day, and one of the doorgates of the palace was smashed. Then deluging rains caused inundations in many provinces. Yin Tsung, at his wit's end, proclaimed an amnesty in 1458. Shih Heng could leave jail. In 1459 Shih Heng invited an astrologer to read his horoscope. The clever man guessing his client's meaning, predicted that in the Shih family an emperor would arise, founder of a new dynasty, but that he would have to act with the utmost caution. Shih Heng broke the news to his son, Shih Pien, for whom he had previously secured the office of Governor of Ta-t'ung. The young man, not cautious enough in his speech, let the secret leak out in Ta-t'ung. The officials of Ta-t'ung reported at court and judges arrived. Shih Pien poisoned himself. His father was committed to jail and ended his life in the same way. The officials of Ta-

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